



# The New WIC: Food and Focus

## Breastfeeding

### *Education by WIC Staff*

WIC's goal is to encourage every mother to initiate breastfeeding and to continue to breastfeed exclusively. The new WIC food packages that begin October 1, 2009 are designed to provide incentives to support that goal. WIC is making strides towards promoting exclusive breastfeeding as the normal and expected way to feed all infants and away from the current pattern of routine issuance of formula to breastfed infants. We must educate women who become pregnant about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and about WIC benefits, including breastfeeding support. Use these key messages when talking with pregnant women.

- ☞ Babies were born to be breastfed!
- ☞ The more breastmilk a baby gets, the healthier the baby and mom will be. Benefits last a lifetime.
- ☞ Babies fed only breastmilk are healthier than babies fed formula or a combination of formula and breastmilk.
- ☞ Just one bottle of formula can interfere with the breastmilk health benefits.
- ☞ Breastfeeding helps a baby reach her full potential, which includes better health and higher IQ.

### *New Breastfeeding Food Package Details and Highlights*

**What is WIC's definition of "breastfeeding?" Does breastfeeding once a day count?**

USDA defines breastfeeding as, "the practice of feeding mother's breastmilk to her infant on the average of at least once per day." Therefore, breastfeeding once a day is considered breastfeeding.

**How do the new food package rules differ from the current rules for the mom who is partially breastfeeding a 6 to 11 month old infant?**

Currently, a mother who is partially breastfeeding a 6 to 11 month-old infant may receive a "pregnant/partially breastfeeding" food package for herself. She may also receive up to the maximum amount of formula allowed for a partially breastfed infant (i.e. up to 8 cans of powder formula) and may remain on WIC until her infant turns 1 year or she reports that she is no longer breastfeeding.

The new rules also permit the mother to remain on the program up to one year as long as she is breastfeeding. However, the main difference is that the amount of formula allowed for the partially breastfed infant has been reduced. If an infant receives more than the maximum allowed (i.e. 4 cans of powder infant formula) the mother will not receive a food package. The mother will remain on the WIC program as a breastfeeding woman (category B) and the program benefits for her will include support, nutrition education, and a breast pump if appropriate.

### **What are the food rule changes that promote and support breastfeeding?**

#### *1. "Fully Breastfeeding" food package*

Mothers who provide only breastmilk to their infants will receive more milk, cheese, eggs, fruits and vegetables and both peanut butter and beans, as well as canned fish.

#### *2. Additional food package benefits for mothers who are breastfeeding multiples*

Women who are fully breastfeeding multiple infants will receive 1.5 times the "Fully Breastfeeding" food package.

#### *3. Addition of infant food*

Around 6 months of age, all babies need food that supplies iron and zinc. Meat is one of the best sources of these nutrients. As an incentive to encourage breastfeeding, fully breastfed infants will receive infant meats, in addition to an increased quantity of infant fruits and vegetables.

#### *4. Restricted formula during the first month*

Not giving formula to breastfed babies during the first month helps protect the breastfeeding mother's milk supply. The mother's growing milk supply develops in response to the amount of milk removed from the breast. Giving formula instead of breast milk reduces the amount of milk the baby takes from the breast. If there is less demand for milk, the breasts will make less milk. Moms should be educated prenatally that WIC will not provide formula the first month to breastfed infants to help facilitate a successful breastfeeding experience.

Best practice is to not provide formula to breastfed infants during the first month to help mothers be successful with breastfeeding. Supplemental formula should only be provided to a breastfeeding infant if requested by the mother and after the CPA has counseled the mother about why she is requesting formula. Information about the impact of formula on lactation and on the mom's breastfeeding goal should be discussed. If an infant receives any formula the first month, the mother will receive the "Non-breastfeeding" food package, which is the least amount of foods.